



Quick Facts:

Flood Events and Organic Farms

Flooding is common in Washington State and may affect your ability to grow and harvest seasonal crops. Follow these steps to prepare your farm for flooding and to minimize financial losses.

Develop a Flood Plan

- ♦ Store bulk crops in locations where flooding will not impact them.
- ♦ Keep tractors and equipment on high ground during flood season.
- ♦ Review flood insurance and crop insurance options for your crops.

Step 1

Harvest Prior to Flooding

If you know that a field under cultivation is likely to flood, be prepared to harvest all crops prior to the flood event. Any crop whose edible portion has come into contact with floodwater is considered “adulterated” by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and cannot be sold for human consumption.

Step 2

Report Floods to WSDA

If your organic site has been impacted by flooding, contact WSDA Organic Program as soon as possible so that we can offer technical assistance. Flooding is not likely to jeopardize the organic status of your field, but samples may be collected at inspection to verify organic integrity.

Step 3

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To prevent contamination of unaffected fields, do not drive farm equipment through flooded areas. The FDA recommends a 30-foot buffer between flooded areas and unaffected fields, and waiting at least 60 days before replanting flooded fields. Testing water from submerged wells is recommended. Be aware of soil that smells of pesticides or petroleum, oily residues, poor seed germination, or crops that appear stunted.

An organic inspector may sample your crops following a flood event. If sample results indicate crops contain pesticide residues above FDA action levels or above 5% of EPA tolerance, the crops must not be sold as organic and the operation must develop a plan to prevent future contamination.

Additional Resources

WSDA Farm Wisdom: Managing Risk on Small Farms Video Series

<https://agr.wa.gov/departments/business-and-marketing-support/small-farm>

Cooperative Extension Webinar on flooding and organic certification

<http://www.extension.org/pages/60874/flooding-and-organic-certification-webinar>

FDA Guidance: Evaluating the Safety of Flood-affected Food Crops for Human Consumption

<https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents>



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